

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application and entry of this Amendment is requested. Claims 1-20 will be active in the application subsequent to entry of this Amendment.

In the Official Action of July 25, 2008, a Final Rejection, claims 1-4, 6, 19 and 20 are rejected on the basis of U.S. patent 4,840,851 to Gölander while the remaining claims are rejected on the basis of U.S. 6,960,275 to Vesley et al as a secondary reference.

Claim 1 has been amended to specify two additional steps, that of shaping the polymerized aqueous solution and, thereafter, drying the water-absorbing shaped body obtained subsequent to polymerization. These procedures are distinct from those disclosed in the Gölander et al reference in which according to the present invention, a water-absorbing shaped body having the desired properties may be obtained by drying a water-absorbing shaped body obtained through polymerization. In contrast, Gölander et al failed to teach the step of drying a water-absorbing shaped body obtained from polymerization.

The amendment made to claim 1 finds basis in the original description of the invention as follows: Attention is directed to lines 17-22 on page 20 of the specification which state:

“‘The water-absorbing shaped body obtained or the water-absorbing compound including the water-absorbing shaped body may be used in a form of a water-containing polymer (water-absorbing gel), or may be dried until a desired moisture content is attained, and used as a dried and shaped body.’ Further, example 1 of the same specification teaches that the water-absorbing shaped body in the string shape was dried for ten minutes at 170°C in a hot air (see line 24 on page 31 to line 2 on page 32).”

Applicants submit that the part of Vesley et al which is indicated by the examiner as pertinent fails to disclose a shaping step.

Specifically as evidenced by Figure 1, the part of Vesley et al which is indicated by the examiner to be pertinent merely discloses a manufacturing method wherein ‘while a viscous aqueous solution is shaped into a film, the viscous aqueous solution is polymerized by irradiating the aqueous solution with light (i.e., while a viscous aqueous solution is polymerized by irradiating the aqueous solution with light, the aqueous solution is shaped into a film).’ That is, Vesley et al, completely fails to disclose an arrangement corresponding to the arrangement of

stopping the radiation of light, and shaping an aqueous solution which includes a polymer as a part thereof (a shaping step).

That is, both Gölander et al and Vesley et al completely fail to disclose an arrangement corresponding to stopping the radiation of light, and shaping an aqueous solution which includes a polymer as a part thereof (a shaping step) as used in the manufacturing method as set forth in independent claim 7.

Applicants' claims, such as claim 7 in particular, include a multiple step feature of a first polymerization to thicken the aqueous solution followed by shaping this thickened solution then a second polymerization where the aqueous solution is fully polymerized in its desired form.

The primary reference to Gölander is in "the field of surface coating of a substrate" that is applying a polymeric coating containing ethylene oxide units as the primary structural units; *see* column 1, lines 7-10.

While it is true that at column 7, lines 11-26, Gölander describes partial then final curing there is no shaping step described or suggested, that is the step of shaping a partially cross-linked gel. In any event, the materials used in Gölander are quite distinct from those specified by the claims of the present application.

Vesley is (apparently) cited for a procedure in which a viscous aqueous solution is polymerized by irradiating the aqueous solution with light, then the aqueous solution is shaped into a film. There is no disclosure in Vesley of initial irradiation, completely stopping the radiation with light, shaping the thickened aqueous solution in a shaping step and followed by final irradiation and cure. As with Gölander et al, Vesley uses a very different polymeric solution primarily based on viscoelastic materials; *see* column 1, lines 18-20 and a more detailed discussion at column 6, lines 28-39. Vesley's viscoelastic pressure sensitive materials are prepared using a release surface to which the materials are applied then irradiated or otherwise cured.

Neither of these documents, either considered separately or in combination, describes that which applicants have directed their claims, namely an acrylic acid or an acrylic acid salt which constitutes at least half, and likely more, up to 95 mol%, of the ethylenically unsaturated monomer. Nor do either of the references describe or suggest procedures in which, like featured in claim 7, there is the first polymerization to polymerize part of the monomer and thicken the

aqueous solution followed by stopping the radiation and shaping the thickened aqueous solution which is then followed by a second polymerization to polymerize the solution.

The examiner contends that the arguments presented in the Amendment of April 11, 2008 have not been accepted.

However, the section "Response to Arguments" provides no specific reason why the examiner does not accept the argument that both Gölander et al and Vesley et al completely fail to disclose an arrangement corresponding to the arrangement of stopping the radiation of light, and shaping an aqueous solution which includes a polymer as a part thereof (a shaping step) as included in a manufacturing method as set forth in independent claim 7. Neither does the section "Claim Rejections -35 USC §103" provide any specific reason for the conclusion or explain that the above arrangement is taught or suggested in Gölander et al or Vesley et al.

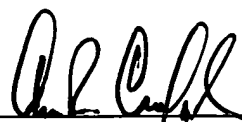
With regard to independent claims 1 and 7, Gölander et al does not describe or suggest or render obvious procedures defined in claim 1 as above amended. Similarly, the combination of Gölander et al plus Vesley does not describe or suggest the procedures defined in independent claim 7. Accordingly, both rejections must be withdrawn.

For the above reasons it is respectfully submitted that the claims are directed to inventive subject matter. Reconsideration and allowance are solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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